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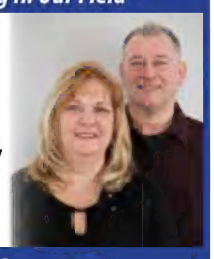
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Introducing Arlo
The newest story from *Wind in the Attic* on page 2

Senior games
How to stay sharp on page 4

Maybelle on the move
Exploring the world on page 7

Sir Sam's Ski and Ride hosted their annual Santa Day, where everyone dressed up in festive gear earned a free day on the slopes. Many rose to the occasion, including, perhaps, the real Santa Claus. /TIM YANO staff photographer

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ARLO: Charcuterie

HI. MY name is Arlo. Kind of weird, eh? I think so. Mum told me it means highlands, or something like that, and our house (used to be our cottage) is in a part of Ontario that's on the Canadian Shield. I know that from school.

It's September 21. Our new teacher wants us to hand in an *editorial* on the last Tuesday of every month. We'll write for one hour during class while she plays quiet music. We can bring notes. And draw. She wants us to feel prepared, but relaxed. Her rules are fine by me:

We know each other better now, so let's record our thoughts. Pencils preferred. Cursive too. No electronics. Parents can help, but just a little. One overnight for self-editing. We'll all write whatever we want as long as we're respectful. Read-aloud is optional.

DEB REED
Wind in the Attic

She won't mark us, and will put all our pages into individual booklets as goodbye gifts in June. She'll be adding some sort of surprise. I've done journals before, but haven't kept all of them. I'll definitely keep this one.

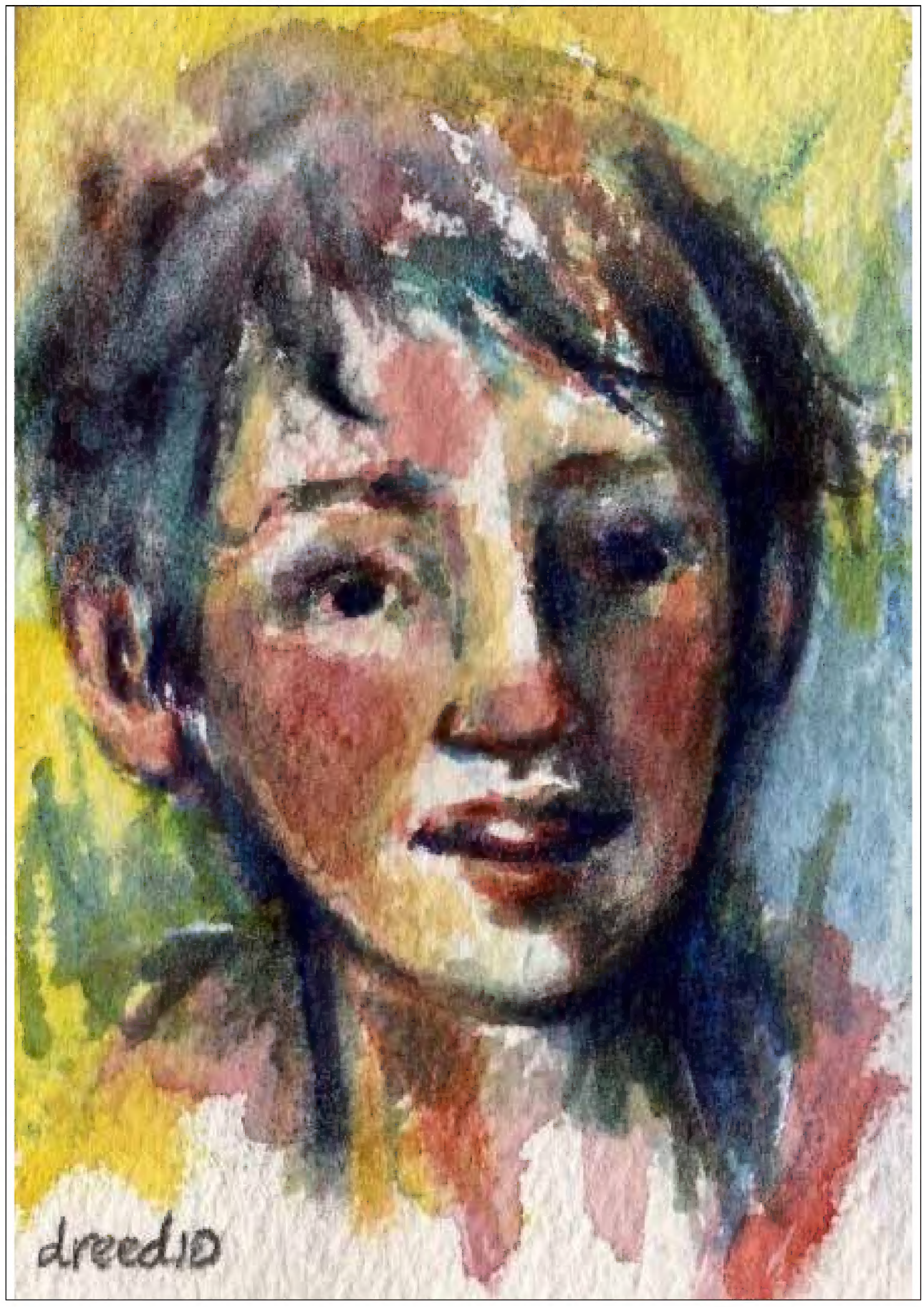
Miss Fields just moved to our town. She hasn't told us much about herself, except that she's really happy to be teaching and painting in Canada. She drives home to one of the blue lake condos near my house. I can see an upstairs light on at night, and I imagine she's doing her homework while I'm doing mine. I'm always looking out my window for something. Birds. Meteors. Moose. Northern Lights.

I'm liking Miss Fields. *Respecting* her. We have a big class, though the size keeps changing. It's a split grade in an old eight-room building near a huge forest. Most of us ride the school bus. I'm in Grade 5, and just turned 10, but there are nine and 11-year-olds in my class too. I've known most of these kids since I moved up here the summer after kindergarten. They can be noisy.

Miss Fields already knows I like writing. I've put a few stories into a mini-newspaper that our public library lets kids design. Some seniors help us with proofreading. I like rhyming too, so once in a while I make a poem. Kids who don't like writing anything at all sometimes tease me, but I'm ok. I can't skate like most of them, so I appreciated what Miss Fields meant when she told us on the first day that classrooms were like *charcuteries*.

What's a 'charcuterie'? I asked Mum when I got home. She knew. The word is French, and means a variety of meats, crackers, pickles, fruit and cheese on a serving board. Even though Mum and I don't eat meat, I understood the picture. It's a '*synonym*', she added. *Your teacher is comparing your class to something made up of different parts. A mix. An assortment. The whole world!*

I like new words. Some even make pictures. So for fun I rhymed my own name. *Arlo-Star-low*. Like the sky over our lake.



CountyLife

The following inserts are being distributed with County Life this week:

Foodland *

Home Hardware *

Minden Valumart *

Rexall *

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Todd's Independent *

All inserts are to selected distribution areas.

For information on how your flyer can be inserted each week in County Life please contact Melissa Armstrong at **613-332-2002** or **melissa@haliburtonpress.com**

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Get The Word Out

Let people know about your event. Send it in to our FREE community events listing in County Life. Email the basics to: classifieds@haliburtonpress.com.

Mousing around

HONESTLY, I didn't know Jenn could hit that high note. Then again, mice have a way of bringing that out in people.

It happened when our oldest cat Mumbles let out a long, feline howl, the likes of which I had never heard before.

"Is he dying?" I said to Jenn.

Jenn immediately let out a similar howl – which was worrisome.

And, right after that, Mumbles walked into the bedroom to show us the mouse he was carrying by the scuff of the neck. I won't lie, the mouse looked embarrassed.

STEVE GALEA
Beyond 35

"He's got a mouse!" Jenn yelped as she bolted upright and began sprinting in place.

Mumbles wore a look on his face that seemed vaguely familiar to me. That's when I realized I had seen that look while hunting.

"Get the camera," I said. "He wants a hero shot for his social media page."

Meanwhile, Maggie, our other cat, also looked on with more than a bit of curiosity.

"Good cat," I said to Mumbles. "That's a real nice one."

That's when he let it go.

If NASA ever wants an alternate power source to launch a rocket, they just need to strap it on to 50 people like Jenn and then throw a mouse in their midst. Seeing that mouse on the loose caused her to leap atop the bed and proceeded to scream at the top of her lungs, making up new words as she went.

The mouse, who had good reason to panic, calmly took stock of the situation. There it was, trapped in a room with two cats, an amused man, and a crazy lady.

So it did what any self-respecting mouse would do. It jumped even closer to Jenn on her bedside table.

All I can say is thank God we have a ceiling in our bedroom. Otherwise, I would have lost her.

"Calm down," I finally said. "It's just a mouse."

I looked at the cats. Apparently, they weren't going to do anything about it.

So I checked the hunting regulations to see what the limit on mice was. (I'm still unsure.)

Then, I tested the wind and approached the little rodent from the downwind direction. I didn't have to sneak too much since Jenn's wailing masked my footsteps.

I looked at her and said, "Get me a Tupperware container and a piece of card stock."

Knowing what I did next would make the difference between sleeping in our bed and visiting a far away nation for a month or so, she had them to me in a flash.

For a second it was touch and go. The mouse bluff charged me at least twice. What followed was a game of cat and mouse, with the cats merely watching and taking notes.

The mouse ran under the bed at least twice. I flushed it out every time. Then it ran to the end of the bedroom under the flower rack. I moved the flower rack. Cornered, it looked up at me with its beady eyes.

I pounced with the Tupperware container and trapped it. Then I slipped the card stock under it and picked it up. I held a captive wild mouse.

Jenn stopped screaming as I walked it out the door and threw it unceremoniously into the nearest snowbank. I was going to salute and tell it that it was a brave adversary worthy of respect. I'm glad I didn't.

In hindsight, that seemed kind of cheesy.

Haliburton HIGHLANDS Seniors Active Living Centre

Check out this month's SALC events and activities for residents aged 55+

Board game drop-in
various dates in January
Seniors Stretch Class
January 6, 20 and 27
Exercise classes with Georgia
January 6, 20 and 27
Seniors Cooking Workshop
January 6 and 20
Functional Senior Fitness
January 8 and 22
Needle felting - winter landscapes
January 8, 15, 21, 30
Senior Balance Fitness Class
January 9, 16, 23 and 30
Genealogy for Seniors
January 9, 10, 21, 23
Fitness Success Workshop
January 12 and 17
Information Sessions
January 13, January 27
Senior Chair Fit Group
January 14, 28
Seniors Exercise Program
January 14, 28
Painting Class
January 15, 29
Chair Yoga
January 15, 29
Falls Prevention Program
January 15, 20, 22, 27, 29
Museum Artifacts & Winter Landscapes webinar
January 19
Crafternoon
January 21
Savouring Stories
January 22

For full details, visit HaliburtonCounty.ca/SALC or pick up a calendar at a municipal office, library or Legion near you!

Haliburton County Seniors Active Living Centre (SALC)
Through this program, older adults (55+) and seniors (65+) are invited to get active, make friends, and be well!
The SALC Program is designed to provide social, cultural, learning, and recreational opportunities for seniors to stay fit, healthy and socially connected in their communities.
SALC Programming is available in Haliburton County beginning in July 2025, through collaboration between the County of Haliburton and local municipalities, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, and multiple partners.

Funding for this program has been provided by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility.
Ontario

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Writing on the Senior Side

Senior Side Games

GAIL STELTER
County Life Contributor

"DON'T TELL me. I've got this." He smiles. "How long will it take you? Come on, guess."

I don't want to guess, but I do venture one … 10 minutes is my guess. Most of the time, it happens in a minute or two, but just in case, 10 minutes is a good choice. Of course, it could be one of those times, when a few hours later, while I'm reading or watching TV, that it gets blurted out from the recesses of my brain, from that messy second drawer in my brain filing cabinet. It's becoming a senior side game that I play a lot. I know the word I am searching. It is on the "tip of my tongue". I will find it, and I don't want Peter to tell me. It's one of our senior side games.

Phone games

"Wait, just a sec, I want to check something on my phone."

"Sure, no problem."

I pick up my phone and … and I look at it. I am focused. Then I pause. I close the phone case and put the phone back on the table.

"I thought you were going to check something. He starts to laugh. You've forgotten.

"Yes, but no worries, it will come back to me."

Explore The House game

"I can't find my brush. I thought I left it in the bedroom."

"Have you seen my glasses? They're not on the cubbies. No, they are not on my head. I am not that forgetful."

"I'll be right back, I just need to get something from the basement." I walk down the stairs. I walk into the television room, and I look around. I go back upstairs.

Night games

No, not what just came to your mind. I'll leave that for you to think about on your own.

Senior side night games include the covers on, covers off, the trips to the washroom, and can't fall asleep worry times. Not a big fan of these games, so I will have to switch from laughing to gratitude. I won't give in to night sadness and frustration. The night games can be upsetting, so I switch to being thankful to be alive and to a renewed realization that every age comes with trials and tribulations. I'd like to see the humour in them all, but I can't, so thankfulness helps. And night games do make for a fun, colourful response to the first question of the day, "How did you sleep?'

Card games

I enjoy playing bridge with the ladies, many of whom have joined me on the senior side. There are a lot of card games on the senior side. The fun part is that I am not the only one to ask the questions.

Whose turn is it to deal?

What was the bid?

What are we in? Two or three hearts?

Which side do the cards go on after you shuffle?

I do enjoy all these senior games. They keep me thinking and remembering, and I like it when it, (whatever "it" may be) comes to me. I laugh a lot when I play these games because laughing is not only fun but a keen realization that this is how the game of life is played on the senior side. I am old enough to appreciate the humour in being old enough. Life is a journey, and these relatively new games keep the journey an ongoing challenge. I know I am mostly "with it" but I do forget things sometimes, and it is easier to make a game of it than to fret or worry. It's just another slice of senior life.

However, if you are worried about your deteriorating short-term memory, there are some additional games you can play to help keep you sharp.

Classic puzzles and solo games

Crosswords and Word Searches: Enhance vocabulary, language, and problem-solving.

Sudoku: Improves reasoning and short-term memory.

Jigsaw Puzzles: Boosts focus, spatial reasoning, and memory.

Card Games (Solitaire, Bridge): Great for concentration and strategy.

Social and Group Games

Bingo: Stimulates hearing, sight, and quick decision-making, plus social fun.

Board Games (Chess, Checkers, Monopoly): Develops strategic thinking and executive function.

Trivia Games (Trivial Pursuit): Tests knowledge and recall.

Word Games (Boggle, Scrabble): Sharpens language and word retrieval.

Digital and modern options

Lumosity and Similar Apps: Offer structured brain training for attention, memory, and processing speed.

Wordle and Online Crosswords: Quick, daily mental challenges.

Other engaging activities

Music: Playing or listening to music can stimulate memory.

Cooking and Gardening: Involve multi-sensory engagement and planning.

I was quite disappointed when I found the above list on the internet, and it did not include my two favourite pastimes that I assumed were good for improving memory: reading books and writing stories. So, I put them on my list. They work for me and might work for you, too. I love being in charge of my list (and my take on what I need to do to live a full and memorable life).

I also read that the key takeaway from the list is consistency, which the article said is crucial; even 15 to 30 minutes daily of mentally stimulating games, combined with physical activity and social connection, can significantly benefit cognitive health.

Finally, for those who might still be a little worried, please be reminded that the short-term memory loss I am describing here is a natural part of aging. Everyone forgets things for a little while. We know we have forgotten the word we want or where we put our glasses.

There is a difference between this forgetting and dementia. I remember my mom's dementia.

We took her to the out-of-town funeral of one of my aunts. She seemed almost lost and looked scared. We stayed close by her side and reintroduced her to nieces and nephews whose names she may have forgotten. On the way home, she described a scene from the day's happenings: the same sentence over and over.

My brother said, "Mom, you just told us that." I whispered to him that she doesn't remember that she told us that. She didn't remember forgetting. It was heartbreaking, but since she didn't remember forgetting, she was feeling happy telling her story. I smiled and commented each and every time she repeated it over and over during the three-hour drive home. Her forgetting is very different from when we can't recall whose deal it is or what we were looking for in the basement.

Nevertheless, it is our job, mine and yours, to keep that second drawer in our brain's filing cabinet in order. Play the memory games and keep smiling and laughing when you forget something, because you know you forgot it.

Wishing you a Happy New Year of remembering and not remembering and playing the senior games.

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Santa season

Sir Sam's Ski and Ride hosted their annual Santa Day, where everyone dressed up in festive gear earned a free day on the slopes. Many rose to the occasion, including, perhaps, the real Santa Claus. /TIM YANO staff photographer

Slow down this holiday season

I THINK WE Are all creatures of habit. The holiday season offers us a real test, we have habits and traditions and commitments and we often get overloaded. So much so that at a recent meeting where I asked the icebreaker question; what are you looking most forward to about the holiday season, almost all the people in the group answered: when it is all over.

I can totally understand that sentiment, as I have all the lists and shopping trips of my own, but let's reflect for a moment. In a holiday season that features family and celebration many people are just holding on until it›s over. Is there nothing we can do to take back a little control, a little time, a little focus?

TERESA JORDAN
Community Living Contemplations

As someone who loves to write, I try to take time each holiday season to record the season, highlight the year and reflect on where I am heading. I have found that this slows the pace for just a little while, reinforces the joys and lessons, and adds a splash of gratitude in the holiday busyness.

While that practice is not for everyone, what might work for you to step out of the spin for a few moments and dig deep for what the holiday season, the passing of the year, the festive connections really offer? Our community is so very rich, there is a place and role for everyone during the holidays, it is easy to get swept up. Check in with your habits, your traditions, your to-do list and just double check that it is all necessary, maybe there is a little time you can find to just be and just breathe. Time to just enjoy the wonder of the season, of the community and of each other. All the best in this wonderful time of the year.

WANTED

HISTORICAL PHOTOS FROM AROUND HALIBURTON COUNTY

Preferably from before 1970
Help revive our *Pic of the Past* section by sending in your pictures. Bring them in to the Echo office at 146 Highland Street or email them to emily@haliburtonpress.com with dates and any other information.

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County Life is produced by The Haliburton County Echo and Minden Times, and published by White Pine Media Corp. Audited circulation: 6,372 July 1 - Dec 31, 2015

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Grey hair

A NEW YEAR, a new month, a new… wait, what is that?! Where did that come from?!

As we welcome in 2026, I also welcomed in my first grey hair.

I saw it there, in the one room in the house I use overhead lighting. I've always had a sandy blonde hue to my hair, so the wiry white wisp stood out like a sore thumb.

EMILY STONEHOUSE
County Life Editor

Now I'd like to open with the fact that I have absolutely nothing bad to say about grey hair. It's a natural part of aging, and every single person who dons grey hair does it with grace and a pride of aging.

I just wasn't expecting to see it on myself. Because while I know I'm aging, as is the natural course of life, I just didn't realize I would see it. Grey hair is something that happens to others around me, and I admire that, but deep in my heart and soul, I am still sweet 16 forever.

Realistically, I am in my mid-30s with three kids, two dogs, one husband, and a partridge in a pear tree. I have a full-time job that brings me pride and a role in the community that gives me purpose.

And somehow, as life ticked and tocked on, I started aging. The grey hair made me take a look at my face as a whole. A sight I had not taken time with in years. I don't spend a lot of my day in front of a mirror. I dash on some mascara with a toddler clinging to my legs while I slosh the last of my coffee and swirl some mouthwash.

Often I will make it through an entire day not noticing a smear of peanut butter on my cardigan or a seed of raspberry in my teeth.

But when that grey hair made its appearance, I took a good look.

And staring back at me was a face I didn't recognize. Lines around my eyes, creases along my mouth. The mascara I had added in the morning was crumbling, and I had a spot of lipstick on my front tooth.

I'm getting older, I thought. But as I made eye contact with myself, a different version looked back at me. A version who has seen mountains and camped in orchards. A version who has made wishes before tossing pebbles into the sea, who has blown out candles on chocolate cake for decades. I saw a version who has looked at each of my children with a pride that surpasses the galaxy, a love that knows no limits.

What a life I have lived, what an honour to have aged.

The lines around my eyes are from squinting with laughter, the creases along my mouth from telling tales and swapping stories. My crumbling mascara is from snowflakes that kissed my eyelashes, the lipstick on my teeth transferred during a hot bowl of chicken soup.

And as I took a deeper look at that singular grey hair, I saw others just forming. Four or five along my scalp; badges of age and a welcome into the next stage.

So as myself and my grey hair enter 2026, may we embrace the unknown, the possibilities of tomorrow, the beauty of each day that passes and the badges we earn for navigating a life well lived.

Because every day is an honour, every day is a gift.

Top 10 reasons to be grateful for the new year

WITH A new year comes new optimism. We all have good reasons for welcoming another year. A new year might usher in a special anniversary or birthday. Others might be happy that last year and its challenges are now in the rearview mirror.

STEVE GALEA
Humour Columnist

All that's fine and dandy, but here are the most common top 10 reasons people are grateful for the new year.

1. One year closer to a statute of limitations for those old parking tickets.
2. It's easier to do the math on the age of that old guy who was born in 1926.
3. Only two more years before you get a new photo on your driver's license.
4. Another opportunity to try not to make a fool of yourself at a New Year's Eve party.
5. 2026 is your lucky number.
6. One year closer to the kids forgetting the whole 6-7 trend.
7. You have always been a huge fan of the even numbered years.
8. One year closer to forced retirement.
9. You are certain that this is the year that yodelling is going to be cool again.
10. This is the year you can honestly take advantage of your senior discounts.

Morsels

Squirrel squatting in the crook of an oak tree, clutching an acorn between its front paws,
gnawing the nut in frozen repose, the tree's bare branches exposing it to prying eyes like mine,
peering up at the squirrel from the park path, snow crumbs beginning to drift through Air,
as I wonder whether squirrels share morsels of what they forage, or keep it for themselves,
hiding their secret stash beneath Snow, I stand still as the squirrel, watching,
burrowing my hands deep into to my coat pockets, my fingers fishing for crumbs to toss onto the ground,
for other squirrels to find, but all my fingers feel is a tinfoil wrapped square of chocolate, forgotten, now found,
as I savour the sweet morsel melting in my mouth, wondering whether the squirrel savours the acorn in the same way,
pausing in its gnawing the moment it notices the hulking giant on the ground, skulking around the base of the tree,
the black beads of its eyes boring into mine, as I stare back, the Air between us, blurred by snowflakes,
that I blink away from my eyes, wondering whether my presence down here on the ground,
poses a threat to the squirrel, or maybe just a nuisance, bothering the squirrel as it tries to feast in peace,
squatting up there, on the limb of an oak tree, its beady eyes glaring down at mine,
the way a grade school teacher's once did,
refusing to glance away 'till I mumbled the wrong answer to a question I didn't know,
bowing my head then, like I do now,
peering at blades of grass poking through Snow, as I turn to go, leaving the squirrel to finish its meal alone,
passing other squirrels that scurry past, some clutching nuts between their paws, bounding up the trunks of trees,
to find a limb or branch to rest on, and devour their morsel in peace, I watch a grey squirrel sniff at the Snow,
its tail stiffened by Wind, foraging for a meal as snowflakes float through Air, and I hold out my hand,
feeling the wetness melt into my palm, wishing I had something to offer the squirrel besides this silent wish,
the squirrel's tail swishing in the Wind as it streaks across the park, searching for food,
passing another grey squirrel, doing the same, snowflakes smearing the space between us, as I clomp along the path,
feeling the bloat in my belly, still full from its last meal, stealing a glance back over my shoulder
at the oak tree where the squirrel squatted, gnawing on an acorn, the tree limb, bare as its branches, the squirrel, gone,
the black beads of its eyes foraging somewhere, as I inhale Air, laced with Snow,
holding morsels of winter deep in my lungs, tasting its pureness as I exhale, long and slow,
watching a grey squirrel's tail swishing through Snow, scavenging for its next meal.

Sylvie Kalenda

Feliz Navidad from Mexico, don'tcha know

DEAR READER,

Why, if ol' Maybelle didn't brave driving Brewster, my trusty truck, to Pearson Airport in a snowstorm to catch a plane to Puerto Vallarta (PV), Mexico, don'tcha know. Harrowing, I tell you. Greasy roads that made this grey-haired apple doll wonder if the stress of just getting there was worth it. Not only was our plane delayed almost three hours, we (Vilma Yuccch and I) sat in the Porter aircraft (which I love) on the tarmac for a fourth hour (which I didn't love), waiting for the wings to be de-iced.

MAYBELLE'S
Fireside Stories

Yes, Vilma's sweetheart, Officer Stanley Penelope McBottom had to work double time due to his partner, Officer Jack Ismissingher falling on the ice while curling, and fracturing his femur, don'tcha know. Officer McB and Vilma had planned their romantic getaway for months, but as fate would have it, Vilma got stuck with me! Yep, being the selfless sweetheart that he is, Stanley insisted that Vilma go without him, and that ol' Maybelle be the beneficiary of his trip.

So, there we were, finally, 33,000 feet up in the air eyeballing each other with deep sighs from the stressful start of our Mexico adventure that would begin five and a half hours later, far away from snow and sub-zero temps of Lake WhaddayathinkImean.

At the PV airport, it was all easy-squeezy until, with our luggage at hand, the driver of the taxi service that Officer McB had arranged to pick us up was nowhere to be found. And a gaggle of folks who worked there spoke little or no Englise, so it was a bit of a debacle until it was finally figured out. Was ol' Maybelle just a little bit rattled after an already long day? You betcha! Mucho!

Off we went in a taxi being driven among a sea of other taxis past lush palm trees, enormous hotels, super colourful shops and restaurants as our bodies melted into a relaxed stupor from a long stressful day. Welcoming the warmth of the mid-eighty-degree air.

Zona Romantica (the Romantic Zone) is where our Airbnb condo was located -- a vibrant PV area lined with cobble stone streets, (forget wearing sandals, running shoes were the go-to footwear to help prevent falling over broken sidewalks, which ol' Maybelle did twice, don'tcha know), shops and restaurants galore, massage and facial salons, pharmacias on every block, (no kidding), taco stands, high end clothing stores, open-air bars, and local art galleries to small hole-in-the-wall tchotchke shops. And sales folks standing outside hawking their wares, trying every which way to get you to buy something. "Hey, Beautiful Lady!" Now, when it comes to this old apple doll you KNOW that's a stretch. But, of course, they were referring to Vilma who looks like a fairy princess in a Barbie suit, don'tcha know.

Why, if Officer McB didn't arrange one peachy Airbnb, don'tcha know. But, I remind you, it was meant for him and his sweetheart, Vilma.

Our favourite part was the rooftop infinity pool that was a wowser and had a view to match. Lush purple and pink bougainvillea flowing from pots on balconies of houses and condos filling the lush green hills. Turn your head a smidgen to the right and you're looking at the Pacific Ocean lifting your soul. And speaking of being lifted … why if we didn't see somebody parasailing hundreds of feet above the ocean, which from our point of view looked like he was flying high over beach front rooftops! Oh boy, what a feeling that must be!

So, the first night we're there, after emptying our bags, we walk no more than three short blocks from our condo when music fills the air followed by a procession of Mexican indigenous dancers, musicians, and folks wearing white and holding candles, which we later learned was part of The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe -- a national holiday in Mexico celebrated with vibrant cultural and religious festivities, don'tcha know. And let me tell you, this was just the beginning of all the public music and dancing just about everywhere we went.

Three blocks south is the Malecon, a mile long walking path with the beach on one side and restaurant after restaurant and shops on the other … as well as a beautiful public park where, two nights later (folks love to walk along the Malecon at sunset) Vilma said: "Look, Maybelle, a party!" Well, it truly was a big public park with a live band and hundreds of people dancing, surrounded by food concessions and booths upon booths of ice creams and pastries. What a hoot! Why, if Vilma and I didn't join in dancing with the others followed by tasting every other sweet treat that was being offered.

"You got to see our famous church here in Zona Romantica," Pamela, our lovely Mexican receptionist, told us. And, as fate would have it, after walking blocks and blocks in the heat, we arrived at the church just as a wedding had begun. The bride was waiting for her cue to walk down the aisle with what appeared to be her mother. The doors were wide open for the public to come in, so Vilma and I happily tiptoed into the magnificent old church with its three-story high ceiling on this extremely joyous occasion.

Now, with Christmas only seven days away, the Malecon was filled with festive ornaments – sleighs with reindeer, towering metal Christmas trees that workers were erecting for days, then covering with twinkling lights. And wouldn't you know, Vilma and I just had to stop and listen to a super talented young fifteen or so Mexican boy belting out Christmas songs in Spanish to Michael Bublé band tracks, don'tcha know.

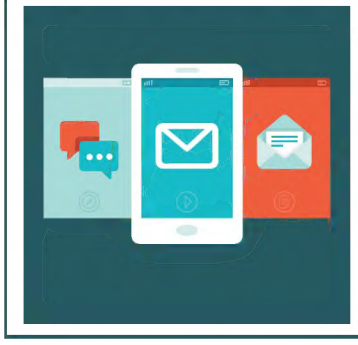
It really pays to be friendly, and Vilma loves talking to everybody, so we found out that at 6 p.m. the next evening, the tallest Christmas tree in Mexico was going to be lit up down on the public pier, and there was no way we were going to miss that.

Hundreds of people filled beach-front restaurants or sat on the sand or whatever they could find, watching and waiting for the magical lighting ceremony to begin. An M.C. engaged the crowd in a count down and then – there it was! All aglow and lighting up the night. A beautiful and joyful sight to behold.

Now, I have to say, Vilma and I sure loved our time in Puerto Vallarta. And ol' Maybelle is still feeling mighty grateful for being in paradise for ten whole days. (Thank you, Officer McB!) The time flew by so quickly it seemed like a dream … and when Beanpole emailed us asking what day we were returning to Lake WhaddayathinkImean, I sighed and wrote back: on Sadderday!

Dear Reader, don't get me wrong. I love Lake WhaddayathinkImean, but seeing nature lush to its core, and being free from having to wear heavy winter gear: boots, leggings, mittens, hats and coats, was just the kind of spirit lifting ambrosia this ol' gal gobbled up like Apple Brown Betty. And now that I'm back in my cozy corner in Lake W with my treasured friends and beloved pet bear, Bogart, I truly wish you had a warm and wonderful Christmas, Channukah or however you celebrate this special time of year … and, of course, a very happy, healthy, and peaceful 2026!

Maybelle's Fireside Stories is written by Jerelyn Craden. "Maybelle's Cure for What Ails You," 21 of Maybelle's best short stories and her novel: "Vessie Flamingo Outshining the Moon" are now available at www.amazon.com.



Have a thought, comment or opinion you'd like to share?

Send a letter to the editor to
emily@haliburtonpress.com

HALIBURTON COUNTY HUSKIES

Home Game

VS

Saturday, Jan. 3 - 4 p.m.

Upcoming Home Games

Sunday, Jan. 4
2 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 17
6 p.m.

S.G. Nesbitt Memorial Arena

For more information please visit our website

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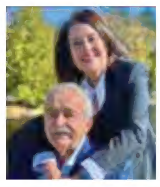
613 MOUNTAIN ST $395,000

Immaculate & Cozy 3 bedroom home in the Village of Haliburton. Main Fl Bedroom with 4 pc Bath, 2 upper level bedrooms with ensuite Bath. Spacious Kitchen/Dining Area with Walkout. Full Basement. Walk to town for all amenities.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



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Sales Representatives

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1 1/2 storey private home with 2+1 bedrooms and just over 1500 sq. ft. of living space - galley style kitchen with plenty of storage space - freshly renovated living area with new pot lighting - w/o to font and side deck - main floor laundry with a 2pc. bath - 3 pc bath on 2nd floor - new plank flooring on second floor - w/o partially finished lower level - FA propane heat - 1.58 acres of privacy

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Jacquie Barry
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FLEMING ROAD - $1,399,000

This 87-acre parcel of land is right in the growing community of Minden. Located on town water/sewer, this property is level & ready for potential development. Located beside the Fairgrounds, & within walking distance of the elementary school, arena, curling club, sitting just on the edge of town. Developers take note.

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Sales Representatives
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2026
HAPPY NEW YEAR
Rick Forget Broker 705-457-0580 • haliburtonhighlands-remax.ca

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26 REID ST., KINMOUNT $648,000

Welcome to a very private, spa-like setting with many recent updates and MAIN FLOOR LIVING.
The perfect full time home or cottage.
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jackiedhardman@gmail.com

646 MOUNTAIN STREET $359,000

Spacious, 2 BR bungalow w/great in-town location. 1100 sq ft., low maintenance EXT & lot, perfect home for seniors, empty nesters, snow birds or first time buyers. LR/DR features laminate floors & opens up to KIT w/ oak kitchen cabinets w/ pot drawers, lazy susan, pantry & breakfast bar that overlooks the DR. Large mud/laundry room w/laundry tub, built in cabinets. 4 pc bath. Master BR with his & hers closets, organizers, walkout to patio. Generous 2nd bedroom. Paved driveway. Walk to the Village of Haliburton. Town sewers

Deb Lambe
Sales Representative
705-854-0103
debra.lambe@gmail.com

Lynda Litwin
Sales Representative
705-457-8511
lynda@lyndalitwin.ca

1211 GELERT ROAD $1,200,000

- 2 bedroom, 2 bathroom, 2019 Royal Home. Large deck surrounding home
- 49.9 Acres with trails
- Home is a dual heat system. Can use either forced air propane furnace or forced air wood boiler.
- 55'x24' shop or office with in-floor heating, steps from the house.
- More outbuildings and storage on the property, Heated greenhouse
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Happy NEW YEAR
From Our Entire Team!

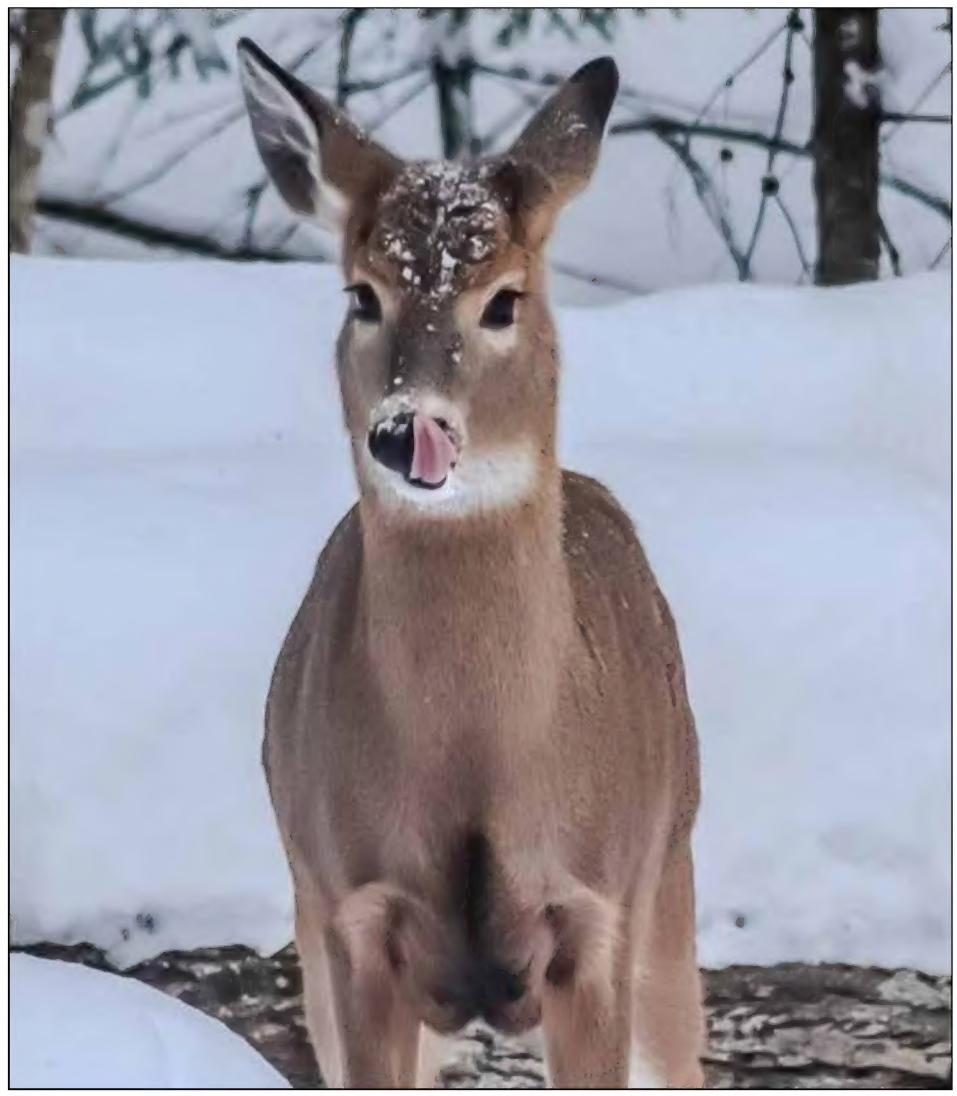
Nature in your backyard

County Life welcomes photo submissions depicting life in the Highlands. Email emily@ haliburtonpress.com. Please ensure images are high resolution - 200 dpi, 10 inches at its longest edge.

Ducks make a splash by Debi Ireland

Fisher by Tammy Nash

Pine Marten by Tammy Nash



Cheeky deer by Jill Moulton

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Dashing through the snow by Tammy Nash

HCSA provides update to trails

THOMAS SMITH
County Life Staff

In the aftermath of the Ontario government's announcement of $4.9 million to snowmobiling clubs, changes may be coming once again to Haliburton County's snowmobiling trails this year.

The Haliburton County Snowmobiling Association (HCSA) made the call to close the former B112 trail amidst the Ontario Federation of Snowmobiling Clubs' calls to close unkept and dead-end trails.

"We could not groom it enough," said HCSA President Neil Vanderstoop. "It's one of my favourite trails."

After the announcement of government funding, HCSA's District has called for the complete restoration of all 268 kilometres of trails lost.

This could include the former B112 trail.

"We are going to see what happens," said Vanderstoop.

The president says that the former B112 trail sees an excess of summer traffic. However, with the HCSA's investment of a bridge along the trail, they do see value in reopening the trail for sledding use.

This year, the HCSA will have some new trails, especially around the Blairhampton area. Additional kilometres of trails will be announced, once the HCSA can finalize an arrangement with both the government and landowners.

In Dysart, sledders now have an optional route alongside the shore of Head Lake through Sam Slick Park to the parking lot across from Hook, Line and Sinker.

In the winter, dozens of sleds can be seen parked in the parking lot. Now, the sledders will have designated parking near the library.

Before the season began, the HCSA was told by their district that one of their groomers would be used by another club this year. The district wanted the HCSA to go down to three, but due to the terrain of the county and number of riders that travel through our trails, they negotiated the use of four groomers.

With enough groomers hired this season, Vanderstoop is confident that their roster of groomers will be up for this year's challenges.

Around 20 groomers will be in charge of Haliburton County's 330 kilometres of twisty and rocky terrain.

One hurdle that has been thrown their way is that they are unable to operate the groomers above -3 Celsius. Each groomer has the technology to record its location, temperature and speed. Groomers are also not allowed to begin until after 4 p.m. unless they have a good reason to begin grooming early.

There are also plans to utilize artificial intelligence to help with creating efficient grooming schedules.

Vanderstoop is confident that even with the new grooming parameters, there should not be any issues with the maintenance of trails.

If you have been downtown Minden, you have likely noticed the lack of a snowmobiling bridge yet. The bridge is managed by the HCSA and the township. While Vanderstoop has been trying to get the bridge installed, he says that the water levels are still too low.

While one contractor has told him that he could install the bridge with his cranes, Vanderstoop is not sure if the bridge will span across the river while the water level is so low.

With trail passes already on sale, Vanderstoop reports that 1,660 riders have identified that they will be riding in the Haliburton County area.

Last Monday, volunteers with the HCSA noted 15 riders were riding along the closed rail trail without snowmobiling passes.

Snowmobiling without a trail pass is illegal and will result in a fine. Paying for a trail pass not only gives you access to the trails, but supports the efforts of keeping the trails in rideable condition.

Haliburton County's trails are unique. Acting like a spider's web, riders can ride to Whitney, from Carnarvon to Minden, across the rail line to Twin Lakes, and everywhere in between.

In the new year, the HCSA will be taking part in the ice races at the Pinestone and at the Family Day event in Algonquin Highlands. This past week's rain and snow may be a benefit to the trails, says Vanderstoop. With the rain compacting the snow and snow following the rain, it will help tighten the base, while having a nice layer of snow for sledding on top.

Unlike previous years, Vanderstoop says that he is going to be on the trails as much as possible this year.

"I only have so much time left," he said.

As the longtime HCSA president, Vanderstoop says that this will be his last season holding the reins.

Fortunately, he says that there has been a huge turnout of young sledders and business owners wanting to get involved with the HCSA. He trusts that the club will be in good hands.

"There are going to be lots of subtle changes this year," said Vanderstoop. "Two things need to happen for snowmobiling to happen. There needs to be volunteers and we have to sell passes."

This year, the HCSA has chosen the Minden Urgent Care Clinic as their Charity of the Year for 2026. Two dollars for every hour of grooming time along the Rail Trail portion of the TOP B103.

Vanderstoop and the entire HCSA would like to thank their supportive landowners and dedicated team of volunteers this year.

If you are interested in supporting snowmobiling, one of Haliburton County's top tourist draws, please visit their website hcsa.ca and fill out a volunteer form.

Legion Events

Branch 441 Kinmount

Monday: Bid Euchre 1 p.m.
Tuesday: Closed
Wednesday: Mixed Darts, 7:30 p.m.
Thursday: Closed
Friday: Bingo- Doors open at 5 p.m., play at 6:45 p.m. Supper specials every Friday starting at 5 p.m. May purchase special and eat in club room downstairs. Clubroom opens at 4 p.m.
Saturday: Clubroom opens at 3 p.m. Meat draw 5:30 p.m.
Special events:
3rd Thursday of the month 7 p.m. executive meeting and 7:30 p.m. general meeting (members only)
3rd Sunday of the month Ladies Auxiliary Meeting (members only)
Hall rentals available at reasonable prices. Call 705-488-3462 or 705-928-7105. We welcome everyone to our events and we look forward to seeing you!

Branch 129 Haliburton

Mondays: Bridge 1 p.m. Schofield Rm. Youth darts 6:30 to 8 p.m. Clubroom 10 to 18 years of age. All are welcome, no experience necessary
Tuesdays: League darts 7 p.m.
Wednesdays: Bid Euchre 1 p.m. start – Main Hall. Bingo doors open at 6 p.m. Bingo 7 p.m. FirstWed of each month with jackpot. Follow Facebook.com/Branch129 Bingo for the most up-to-date information
Thursdays: General Meeting third Thursday of the month, 6:30 p.m. All members urged to attend.
Ladies Auxiliary last Thursday of the month at 1 p.m.
Fridays: Five meat draw, five prizes each draw, first draw 4:30 p.m., last draw 6:30 p.m. Tickets $2 per draw. Paul Sisson, MC. Friday fun darts from 4:30 p.m. and onwards. 50/50 Draw 5:40 p.m.
Whether you're planning a function for 10 or 200, call Cheryl Waller at 905-447-7741, email haliburtonlegionrentals@gmail.com or visit haliburtonlegion.com. Everyone is welcome! Club room hours: Mon. 3 to 6 p.m., Tues. 3 to 9 p.m., Wed/Thurs. 3 to 6 p.m. Fri. 3 to 7 p.m.

Branch 636 Minden

Lunch - Monday to Friday
Monday: Rug Hookers every second week. Bid Euchre 1 to 3 p.m.
Tuesday: Food 5 p.m. Canoe FM Bingo 6 p.m.
Thursday: Cribbage 1 to 3 p.m., Darts 7 to 9 p.m. and Euchre 7 to 9 p.m.
Every other Friday: Karaoke 8 to 11 p.m.
Friday Fish & Chips, Wings. Lunch 11a.m. to 2 p.m. and Dinner 4 to 7 p.m.
Saturday All Day Breakfast 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. with three Meat draws at 11 a.m.
Call ahead any day for take-out: 705-286-4541.
Schedules are subject to change without notice. Check our Facebook page Minden Legion Branch 636 for more info.

Branch 624 Wilberforce

Hours - Sunday: Special Events Only, Monday: 7 to 10 p.m., Tuesday: Closed, Wednesday: 2 to 10 p.m., Thursday: 2 to 6 p.m., Friday: 2 to 11 p.m., Saturday: 2 to 9 p.m.
Sunday: Jan. 11 L.A Breakfast $10. 9 to 11 a.m.
Mondays: Jan. 5, 12, 19, 26 Darts $5/player 7 p.m.
Tuesdays: Jan. 6 Veteran's and Seniors Exercise Club. First meeting Jan. 6 starts at 1 p.m.
Jan. 20, 27 Veteran's and Seniors Exercise Club. Starts at 1:30 p.m.
Wednesdays: Jan. 7, 14, 21, 28 Darts $5/player 2pm
Jan. 7, 14, 21, 28 Quick Supper Menu changes weekly $10. 5:00pm-6:30pm
7, 14, 21, 28 Open Cribbage 6:30 – No need to pre-register
Thursdays: Jan. 1 President's Levy 1pm
Jan. 8, 22 HHHS Social Rec 10am
Fridays: Jan. 2, 16, 30 Fish and Chips 1pc/$15, 2pc/$20. 5 to 8 p.m.
Jan. 9, 23 Wings and Jam Session $15/lb. 5 to 8 p.m.
Jan. 9, 23 Community Care 55+ Lunch $17. noon
Saturday:
Jan. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Meat Draw 3 p.m.
Jan. 24 Pat and Phyllis Gallen Lake Trout Ice Fishing Derby. Weigh in 3 p.m.
Jan. 24 Karaoke 8 p.m.
Jan. 31 Nacho Average Trivia 7 p.m. $5/Player
Call the Legion for more info 705-448-222

Math Blocks

Fill in the missing blocks with numbers between 0-20.
The numbers in each row add up to the totals on the right.
The numbers in each column add up to the totals on the bottom.

		11	34
2		**15**	27
	5		20
29	18	34	

solution

8	5	7
15	10	2
11	3	20

CANADA MONTH HISTORY

1803

First Canadian Paper Mill is built in Quebec. It is established by Walter Ware and Benjamin Wales, and is considered to be the beginning of Canada's pulp and paper industry.

People FACT:

This term for restaurant workers typically refers to those who wait on tables.

Answer: Servers

Get Scrambled

Unscramble the words to determine the phrase.

KMEA A SERVRENOTAI

Answer: Make a reservation

NEW WORD

GRATUITY

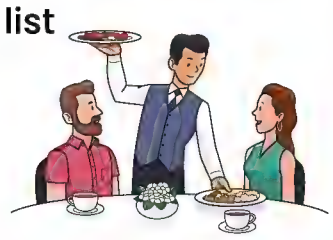
a tip given for service

"How they say that in..."

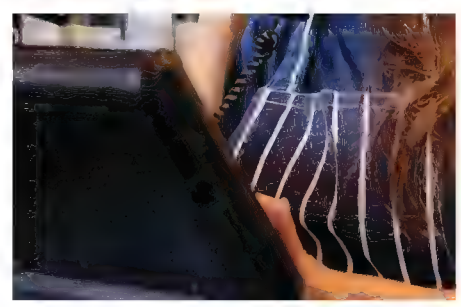
English: Food
Spanish: Comida
Italian: Cibo
French: Nourriture
German: Essen

Did You KNOW?

When it comes to the busiest day of the year for the restaurant industry, Mother's Day tops the list for bookings and footfall.



Get the PICTURE?



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

Answer: Restaurant host

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Deadline Thursday at Noon

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Your ad will run in
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Papillion puppies 8 weeks. 1 year old male, 2 year old male, 4 year old female. Playful small breed very hardy. Call James **613-332-1585** No ID must leave number on answering machine, will return call.

FIREWOOD FOR SALE

CUT SPLIT & DELIVERED seasoned firewood 90% maple/all hardwood. Very clean wood. Dry also available. CALL AND INQUIRE: **705-930-7198**

WANTED

Wanted: scrap cars and trucks. Cash paid. Please call **705-286-3758** or **cell 249-332-1212**

STORAGE

Indoor heated boat storage in Haliburton: $90 per foot for the season. Hydro provided. Call Brett at 647-405-0143

FOR RENT

Spacious one bedroom, one bath lower apartment located in the heart of Minden. The apartment provides a perfect blend of town and country living. Features include front door access, open concept living, in-unit laundry and outdoor living spaces, internet and preferential parking spots. $1,875 All inclusive plus shared hydro. Please Contact: **647-394-4899.** Photos available upon request.

Newly renovated 2-unit house on 9.5 scenic acres near Haliburton. LOWER: 1-bed, 1-bath. Features open-concept living, new appliances, in-unit laundry and outdoor living spaces. 10 minutes from Haliburton & perfect for peaceful living. Contact: info@aboveboardcarpentry.com **705-455-2196**

Large one-bedroom apartment available for rent January 1st. Single, mature, non-smoking tenants preferred. Fully furnished. Includes water access, private entrance, and 400 sq foot screened porch. 10 minute drive from Haliburton. $1700 per month. Includes hydro, heat, wifi, and parking. Please call 705-457-0861. Pictures available upon request.

COMMERCIAL SPACE FOR RENT

Meeting Space for Rent: Blue Sky Studio at Haliburton Chiropractic. Bright open space downtown with private entrance and washroom. Available for rent by the hour, half or full day. Contact: **705-457-3500** info@haliburtonchiropractic.com

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COUNTY LIFE IS LOOKING FOR RURAL ROUTE DRIVERS

County Life is looking for Rural Route drivers.
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or **jenniferm@haliburtonpress.com**

County Life

FLYER INSERTER REQUIRED

We are currently looking for a person to help insert flyers each Wednesday into County Life.
For details call Jennifer at
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or email
jenniferm@haliburtonpress.com

Community Events

Send your event listing to classifieds@haliburtonpress.com

Free Public Skating
When: Ja. 2, 2:30 to 4 p.m.
Where: S.G. Nesbitt Memorial Arena, Minden
Courtesy of Karen Nimigon | BROKER Your Local Real Estate Expert

Tech Help Walk-in-Clinic
When: Friday, Jan. 2, 10 a.m. to noon
Where: Wilberforce Library
Stuck on a tech problem? First come, first served. Each person gets a 30-minute session with library staff to tackle one specific technology challenge. One session per person per day.

Free Public Skating
When: Jan. 4 @ 3 to 4 p.m.
Where: A.J. Larue Arena, Haliburton
Courtesy of Karen Nimigon | BROKER Your Local Real Estate Expert

Trapper's Workshop
When: Sat. Jan.24, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.m
Where: Lloyd Watson Centre, Wilberforce
Everyone is invited to attend. Admission by donation,Foodbank donations welcome. Further info contact Ted 705-448-2877

Knitting Circle
When: Tuesday, Jan. 6 from 1 to 3 p.m.
Where: Wilberforce Library
Drop in for a cozy afternoon of stitching, chatting, and community. All ages and skill levels are welcome (knitters and crocheters alike).

Recurring events

TOPS: Take Off Pounds Sensibly
When: Monday mornings 9:30 to 11 a.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion Branch 129, upper level
Admission: Yearly membership of $59
A non-profit/commercial network of weight-loss support groups, offers programs for healthy living and weight management.

Bridge for Seniors
When: Mondays at 1 p.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion - Schofield Rm
All welcome

Haliburton Legion Walking Group
When: Mondays at 9 to 10 a.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion - Remembrance Hall
A safe walking environment. Lead by an Occupational therapist.

Free Balanced Fitness, Active Social Senior Classes
When: Second, fourth Tuesday each month 10 to 11 a.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion - Remembrance Hall
All seniors are welcome. Group led by Registered Recreation Therapist

Bid Euchre
When: Wednesdays at 1 p.m.
Where: Haliburton Legion - Remembrance Hall
All welcome!

Duplicate Bridge - Please arrange for a partner.
When: Wednesdays at 12:45 at Park Lane Apartments.
Fridays at 12:45 at Haliburton Legion, Schofield Room.

Cards/Euchre/Cribbage
When: Thursdays at 2:30 p.m.
Where: St. George's Church, 617 Mountain Street

Lakeside Church Service
When: Sunday at 9 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.
Where: 9 Park Street, Haliburton.
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Near-perfect conditions

Mushers draw thousands to Minden Derby

It was a perfect weekend for racing according to the Race Governor of the Minden Sled Dog Derby Val Lougheed. She was commenting following the close of the fourteenth annual Minden Techni-Cal Challenge Sunday afternoon, February 1.

"The weather was ideal, the trail conditions were next to perfect, the spectators came out in droves and the best mushers in north America came to Minden. I couldn't have asked for anything more," Lougheed said.

Her comments were repeated by mushers and many of the thousands of visitors who converged on Minden. "This has always been my favourite race," a veteran musher said. "The trail is a tough one, but the welcome and organization is second to none." Many of the spectators repeated those sentiments.

The top spot in the eight dog competition went to Pierre Thibadeau of St. Georges, Quebec. He managed to shave one minute and twenty seconds off his Saturday time of 29:35.20 to claim the first place prize with an overall run of 57:44.47. The eight dog teams run eight miles each day with the two day total determining the winner. In second spot was Arleigh Reynolds of Spencer, New York who covered the 16 mile distance in 58:36.61. Third place went to John Samburg of Paul Smiths, New York at 59:04.94. Minden racer, and a member of the organizing committee, Steve Lougheed, placed ninth with a time of 1:00:50.76.

World champion musher Lou Serre of Markstay, Ontario led the four dog class with a combined two day total of 30:32.17. The four dog teams run four miles in each of the two heats. Gary Callahan of Madison, Ohio was over a minute behind Serre at 31:41.80 to place second. Third spot went to Pat Hnatiuk of Massey Ontario with a time of 31:58.52. Minden musher Jesse Lougheed placed fifteenth at 36:50.48 with his brother Caleb in twentieth spot at 38:16.38.

The event, which is sponsored by Martin Pet Foods of Elmira, makers of Techni-Cal Dog Food, attracted thousands of spectators to Minden on both days of the weekend. The race had originally been scheduled for January 17 and 18, but had to be postponed due to poor trail conditions.

Leigh Gilchrist of Brechin, Ontario, and his team charge for the finish line during the Saturday heat of the Minden Techni-Cal Challenge Sled Dog Derby. The Gilchrist team was one of nearly 70 to compete during the weekend.

SIRCH book is a guide for other communities

In a quiet room at the University of Toronto, on January 26, a Haliburton County dream became a reality. SIRCH Inc. held a book launch for the book *From Dream to Reality*, the story of how the Women's Emergency House in Haliburton was conceived and created. MPP Chris Hodgson and Diane Cunningham, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the Minister responsible for Women's Issues, were on hand to participate in the event.

From Dream to Reality tells the story of SIRCH's realization of the need for an emergency shelter for women in abusive situations, and the community that helped make the idea a tangible reality. It is a step by step guide for any community to construct its own emergency house. The book was originally written in 1995, but has been updated by Lon Duncombe, due to a large number of requests for information from around the world. Inquiries have been made from as far away as New Zealand, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Holland and Japan, for help on similar projects. The hope is that with this publication, SIRCH can assist other communities in Ontario, Canada and the rest of the world, in the creation of self-sufficient emergency shelters for women.

The Executive Director of SIRCH, Gena Robertson, spoke of the grassroots community participation, hard work and dedication that built the Women's Emergency House. "From Dream to Reality outlines what we did, or didn't do and why, the obstacles, the decisions, the successes and the people involved," said Robertson. "We learned lots of lessons and we've passed those on to the reader."

Women's Emergency House was built in 1993 in response to the need for a refuge for women in Haliburton County. Prior to its construction, a woman who wanted to leave an abusive situation would have to leave the county in order to receive help. Now, after five years of operation, the Women's Emergency House has assisted 39 women and 48 children.

The facility has been accessed on almost 900 bednights. The women range in age from 17 to 64 and the children from two months to 16 years of age. The emergency house contains three bedrooms, with room for up to 12 women and children to stay for up to three weeks. It provides a safe environment and is also wheelchair accessible.

The house was built with the help of many volunteers and local businesses, who donated time, labour and materials. According to Gena Robertson, the house receives no annualized funding from the government. It survives with the help of fundraising and grants. Robertson stated that this venture, although ideal in small rural areas, such as Haliburton County, should not be considered an alternative for government funded facilities.

(more on page 3)

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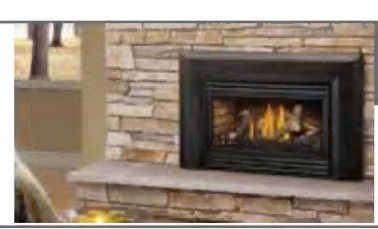

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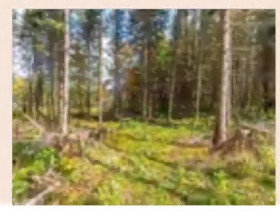

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